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CONFERENCE REPORTS

International Seminar on World Events and Urban Change

Seville, Andalusia, Spain. 26 – 28 Nov 2012

The former Italy Pavilion was selected as host venue for the International Seminar on World Events and Urban Change. The conversion of this imposing building, one of the largest pavilions of the Universal Exposition of Seville 1992, into a business centre set in the heart of the Cartuja Scientific and Technological Park serves to illustrate the topics treated by the seminar, namely the legacy of far-reaching events on fostering urban transformations, improving a city's image, attracting tourists and raising media interest. There was a wide range of presentations by speakers from France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and UK. Discussion was focused in a number of cities with Athens, Barcelona, Beijing, Chicago, Hanover, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Milan, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Seville and Shanghai among them.

As with all conference reports, this one merely provides a selection of the topics treated during the three days. The first panel covered the evolution of world expositions from farm machinery fairs to strategic planning. José María Rovira from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia highlighted two opposite urban transformations in El Raval, Barcelona, following the trends set by the Olympic Games. One is the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, an underused venue disregarding its location, the other is Santa Caterina Market, which creates a close dialogue with its surroundings. His colleague Antonio Pizza criticized the increasing privatization of open spaces and public facilities in Barcelona. From the University of Zaragoza came Javier Monclús, who emphasised the relationship of World Fairs with urban design principles in different periods, and Ricardo Sánchez Lampreave, who introduced us to the pretexts and opportunities of Madrid's bids for Olympic Games. Julio Garnica from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia highlighted the importance of Harnden and Bombelli's exhibitions in spreading US propaganda in postwar Europe. Then two papers were focused in Barcelona, that of Josep Maria García-Fuentes and Sergi Garriga i Bosch was centred on the legacy for the city of 1888 and 1929 expositions while Carolina B. García Estévez argued that the result of Enric Miralles' proposal for the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games was a prelude to a formal and ideological catastrophe. The power of World Fairs as a tool for spreading state control became all the clearer when Juan del Toro, Félix de la Iglesia and José Ramón Moreno from the University of Seville revealed the sociological impacts brought by the Crystal Palace in London 1851 and New York's World Fair 1939. Finally, Ana Ruiz Varona and Jorge León Casero from Universidad de San Jorge in

Zaragoza examined the new infrastructures, urban uses and suburban parks brought by Paris 1900.

The second panel treated the political and administrative processes leading to the creation of world events and their impact at a local and regional level. Ana Tostões from the Technical University of Lisbon focused on the effects of Lisbon 1998 over the city's image. After that a number of papers highlighted some aspects of Seville's Expo '92 in the context of its 20th anniversary. Víctor Pérez Escolano from the University of Seville discussed about the complex process leading to the creation of the exposition especially regarding infrastructures. His colleagues Eduardo Mosquera Adell and María Teresa Pérez Cano pointed out the significance of the Expo '92 for the reinforcement of Seville as the capital of Andalusia and its effects on increasing territorial imbalance and lack of metropolitan structure. Bartolomé Ruiz González from the Andalusian Ministry of Culture made a presentation about the conversion of Santa María de las Cuevas Monastery into a scientific, educational and cultural facility. Then a series of papers were presented by researchers from the University of Seville. Laura Moruno Guillermo showed a number of maps collecting information about recent transformations in Seville's metropolitan area. José Adolfo Herrera Martín introduced us to the relationship of the historic city with the entrances to the expositions of 1929 and 1992. Antonio Gámiz Gordo explored performing arts venues. Ángela López Martín emphasised the importance and fragility of public art in open spaces. This discussion was followed by Manuel Vigil-Escalera y Pacheco's presentation on the radical change brought by Expo '92 over Seville's public spaces. Finally, Juan Carlos Reina Fernández from the University of Granada explained his own experience while working in the planning of Expo '92 and discussed some of the problems not totally solved especially the lack of mixed uses.

The third panel focused on the legacy of world events and on future trends in the international arena. Petros Petsimeris from Paris 1 University highlighted the social and functional transformation brought by Athens 2004 in terms of shifting centralities and boosting urban sprawl. Stephen Essex from the University of Plymouth introduced us to the hard and soft legacies set by the London 2012 Olympic Games in relation to environmental and social sustainability. Stefano di Vita from the Politecnico di Milano examined the process of creating Milan Expo 2015 in a context of increasingly scarce resources. Francesc Muñoz Ramírez from the Autonomous University of Barcelona discussed the role of mega-events in the production of cityscapes to be globally consumed as branded urban images. Architect Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra showed us his project for transforming the former Navigation Pavilion into a new museum in the Guadalquivir river bank. Isaías Pérez Saldaña presented

data concerning the success of the Cartuja Scientific and Technological Park in terms of contribution to Seville's GDP and employment. Renzo Lecardane from the University of Palermo and Guido Cimadomo from the University of Malaga discussed about positive and negative impacts of Expo '92 in Seville, Expo '98 in Lisbon and the Swiss Expo '02. Enrique Naranjo Escudero and Viginia Arnet Callealta from the University of Seville criticized the imposition of symbolic icons over other local needs in Beijing. Óscar Miguel Ares Álvarez from the University of Valladolid highlighted the trend of rebuilding dismantled pavilions. Kevin Meethan from the University of Plymouth and Daniel Barrera Fernández from the University of Malaga emphasised the importance of the European Capital of Culture award in terms of place marketing, tourists attraction, regeneration and promotion of creative industries. Blanca del Espino Hidalgo from the University of Seville focused her presentation on the regional impact of the events hosted by Guimarães and Braga in 2012. Her colleague Giulia Annamaria Bonomini argued that Hanover 2000 was the first experience of practical application of the sustainability issues and an example in promoting urban, social and cultural progress. José V. Guzmán Fernández from the University of Malaga examined the architectural and infrastructural transformations carried out in Granada and Sierra Nevada as part of the Alpine World Ski Championships 1996.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that Eduardo Mosquera Adell and his team coordinated a very professional conference. While having a tight agenda, we also had time to taste a little bit of tapas and enjoy the vibrant nightlife of wonderful Seville in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

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